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ABSTRACT

Effective career counselors need knowledge of the various counseling theories and approaches used in personal problem counseling as well as knowledge of career development. Elements affecting the career counseling interview include theoretical position in relation to career development, how the counselor views the counselee, the place of tests in career counseling, and educational and occupational information. Principles which help to insure an effective career counseling interview include the following: (1) establishing rapport; (2) having clients, rather than the counselor, determine their own career direction; (3) finding out at the beginning of the interview what type of career problem the individual desires to solve; (4) finding out the future time orientation of the individual in respect to a career; (5) helping the individual establish a cognitive map of the career development and decision-making process; (6) helping individuals more fully understand themselves and establish their own criteria for career selection; (7) helping individuals become aware of their many career opportunities and then narrow down their choices; (8) making sure that individual career decisions are based on reliable data; (9) helping individuals understand that career choice is a process and not a one-time event; and (10) making necessary adjustments and compromises as individuals implement their career decisions. (ABL)

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THE CAREER COUNSELING INTERVIEW: DYNAMICS AND PROCESS

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Career counseling is an area of counseling that seems to be coming into its own. In the past, and even in the present, counselors who do career counseling are often treated and considered as second class citizens on a counseling staff to those who do deep personal psychological counseling and therapy. There is today a body of theory and knowledge in the area of career development and career counseling that is being recognized by other professionals in the helping professions, as well as some State licensing and certifying agencies.

To be effective as a career counselor, it is important to have knowledge of the various counseling theories and approaches used in the helping relationships by those who do personal problem counseling. In addition, career counselors need a good theoretical foundation and working knowledge of career development and the many elements, components, and tools needed for an effective career program for individuals from kindergarten through the adult years. With this background, career counselors should be quite well prepared to help the various types of individuals who come to them with a variety of career problems. This knowledge comes through formal training and is enhanced by experience in the work setting.

The purpose of this paper is to present for consideration some of the factors which influence the dynamics of a career counseling interview and to set forth some principles as a guide to those counselors who by choice or assignment find themselves doing career counseling.

The Dynamics

The dynamics that operate during any career counseling interview will depend upon the values, philosophy and theoretical frame of reference of the counselor. Listed below are some of the elements affecting the dynamics of a career counseling interview with which counselors have to deal as they establish their own frame of reference for counseling.

1. THEORETICAL POSITION IN RELATION TO CAREER DEVELOPMENT.

   Harris-Bowlsbey (1984) classified career theories as "vocational choice theories" (Roe,1957) (Holland,1973) with the goal of making a career choice and "career development theories" (Super,1963) (Tiedeman, 1963) (Ginzberg, 1951) which emphasis the process of career development which may lead to successive career choices and positions.

2. HOW THE COUNSELOR VIEWS THE COUNSELEE

   One view sees counselees as lacking in training and experience and therefore needing someone to tell them which career, or careers are best for them. The other view sees counselees as being fully capable

and responsible for their own career decisions and would help them learn the process, the world of career opportunities, and various methods of career research to enable them to make their decisions now and later in life.

3. THE PLACE OF TESTS IN CAREER COUNSELING.

Some career counselors rely heavily on the results of a battery of various types of tests as a matter of course and these would be interpreted during the interview to help the individual make a career choice. Other career counselors would use tests only as requested by counselees or as deemed appropriate to supplement information they already know about themselves.

4. EDUCATIONAL AND OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION

Career counselors who feel that educational and occupational information is important as a support to career counseling would work to have available an adequate career information center. Other counselors would expect counselees to find their own information if they needed it.

The dynamics taking place during an effective career counseling interview is an interplay of the career development knowledge base, skills, and frame of reference of the counselor and helping the individual through the career decision making process. This process includes counselees reviewing their own values, goals, abilities, achievements, interests, etc. in relation to the many career directions and options available and then synthesizing the information and making those compromises necessary to make a career choice. A well trained counselor can help an individual facilitate this process.

The Process

There are several principles which help to insure an effective career counseling interview. These principles are outlined below and discussed briefly. The list is not intended to be all inclusive but will serve as a guide to counselors who wish to improve their career counseling skills while safeguarding the dignity and value of each individual and their right to determine their own career destiny.

1. ESTABLISH RAPPORT

The best way to establish rapport is to quickly get down to work on the student's career problem and continue to help the individual during the interview.

2. INDIVIDUALS DETERMINE THEIR OWN CAREER DIRECTION NOT THE COUNSELOR

The career counseling interview should be conducted in a manner that the counselor serves as the teacher and trainer in the decision

making process and the individuals determine their own career direction.

3. FIND OUT AT THE BEGINNING OF THE INTERVIEW WHAT TYPE OF CAREER PROBLEM THE INDIVIDUAL DESIRES TO SOLVE

   The counselor can find out what career problem the individual desires to solve by asking a direct question--"How can I help you?" This causes the counselee to own his/her problem, define it, and articulate it from the very onset. As the individual is answering the question the counselor must give full attention to the individual and the answer so the interview will focus on the needs of the person. The individual could have other problems but they could be worked out at another time.

4. FIND OUT THE FUTURE TIME ORIENTATION OF THE INDIVIDUAL IN RESPECT TO A CAREER

   Knowing the future time orientation of the individual in relation to a career is a quick way for the counselor to assess the person's level of career development. This can be done simply by asking two questions such as, "Where would you like to live when you are all through school?" "What type of employer have you thought of working for when you graduate?" The answers individuals give to these questions can serve as a basis for a career choice and indicate a direction for the interview.

5. HELP THE INDIVIDUAL ESTABLISH A COGNITIVE MAP OF THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESS.

   A good place to start to help individuals gain a quick understanding of the career development process is to give them a handout which outlines and briefly describes the stages of career development. Discuss the stages briefly and then ask them, "What stage do you feel you are in at this time?" After they have responded, help them to see that the career decision really involves three decisions--the employer, the occupation, and the college major. These decisions can best be made after the individual has established personal criteria as a basis for career selection.

6. HELP INDIVIDUALS MORE FULLY UNDERSTAND THEMSELVES AND ESTABLISH THEIR OWN CRITERIA FOR CAREER SELECTION

   Career counselors often need to assist individuals in reviewing their values, goals, interests,achievements, abilities, needs, desired career lifestyle, etc. as they work to establish their own criteria for career selection. Usually an individual's personal criteria for career selection becomes more crystallized as they review with the counselor their many and varied career opportunities.

7. HELP INDIVIDUALS BECOME AWARE OF THEIR MANY CAREER OPPORTUNITIES IN THE AREAS OF COLLEGE MAJORS, OCCUPATIONS, AND EMPLOYERS AS THEY DESIRE TO CONSIDER THEM AND THEN ASSIST THEM TO NARROW DOWN THEIR CHOICES.

Generally speaking, individuals seeking career assistance have a narrow view of the many opportunities open to them. It is therefore important for the counselor to begin opening their vision to the many options available. For example in the area of college majors the counselor could give the student a handout listing all the majors offered in the colleges at the university of enrollment. Have the student then mark the majors they have an interest in as their possible major choice. This process could also be done with occupations and types of employers. As the individual goes through this narrowing-down process the counselor can assist the person, if necessary, relate personal values, goals, abilities, interests, etc. to the options available. It is often helpful for the counselor to explain to individuals that they can keep all their interests. It is just a matter of selecting an interest for their major area of study and other interests as hobbies or avocational pursuits.

8. INDIVIDUAL CAREER DECISIONS SHOULD BE BASED ON RELIABLE DATA

   For individuals to intelligently choose from among the several college majors or occupations they prefer, they need to obtain data from reliable and even primary sources. Counselors usually need to teach this principle to those they counsel.

9. HELP INDIVIDUALS UNDERSTAND THAT CAREER CHOICE IS A PROCESS AND NOT AN EVENT THAT WOULD ONLY HAPPEN ONCE

   The fact is that there are several occupations a person could go into from any college major and from each occupation a person could work for several different employers doing the same thing. Remind them that career choice is a process and not an event and that it is normal for a person to change occupations as their values, goals, and interests change as they go through life.

10. AS INDIVIDUALS IMPLEMENT THEIR CAREER DECISIONS ADJUSTMENTS AND COMPROMISES MAY NEED TO BE MADE

    According to Harren (1979) individuals receive feed-back from others as soon as they announce what they plan to do for their college major, occupation, and employer choice. If the feed-back is positive, individuals will usually continue to implement their decision. The counselor needs to help the individuals realize that a career choice is an individual matter and that they could go with the decision they have made if they have researched it thoroughly and feel good about it. Adjustments and compromises could be made as needed.

Career counselors need to realize that each individual who comes in for career counseling is unique and the problem each person brings to counseling may change the dynamics of the interview. Counselors should remain flexible as they approach each interview so the career developmental needs and goals for each person could move toward realization.

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